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SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

BY GEORGIA L. CHAMBERLIN

In the preparation of suggestions for leaders of classes in connection with this course, the writer has in mind those leaders who are either untrained, or pressed for time in which to think through the problem of holding the interest of a group to the theme in hand. The leader of a club should feel at liberty to choose from the suggestions offered any which seem to be appropriate for the work of his group, and to reject the rest, or to work out his own plan of presentation and discussion independently. It is taken for granted that the members of the group will have leaflet reprints of the studies in the Gospel of John prepared by Professor Goodspeed. This course presents such a well-defined task that it should result in a genuine and accurate appreciation of this Gospel by all members of the group. Any program which will insure this result may be safely used.

An older generation would have found it difficult to pass from the apparently settled question of the authorship of this Gospel, by John the apostle, to the more recent views which are the basis of these studies, for that older view was part and parcel of the love which has from very early times been manifested by Christian people for this Gospel. But the religious education of the present generation has been so unscientific and desultory that no such prejudice in favor of a particular author will hamper the leader. It is best, therefore, to take it for granted that the group knows little about the fundamental questions of date, authorship, and purpose of the book. Waste no time, therefore, in talking about old theories, but proceed at once to set forth the newer views as presented by the author of this course.

It is most desirable in the study of a single gospel that notebooks should be prepared. If the group is small, and a two-hour meeting is possible, all notebook work may be done in the class. If by reason of the size of the group the work must be done by the lecture method, notebooks may be prepared at home and added to during the lecture. Many pastors are adopting this course as a basis of the weekly devotional service, where, of course, the lecture method must be largely used, although it may be varied by contributions and discussions by members of the group.

Each student of this course should procure two New Testaments, or at least two copies of this Gospel, from which clippings may be made, and also a notebook with a page not less than eight inches in width.

FIRST MEETING

Let each member be provided with the necessary copies of the New Testament or of the Gospel of John and the notebooks referred to above. The leader may dictate, multigraph, or place upon the blackboard the following outline of the gospel:¹

¹ Burton, *A Short Introduction to the Gospels*.

ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL

- I. THE PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL.—The central doctrines of the book so expressed in terms of current thought as to relate the former to the latter and facilitate the transition from the latter to the former. 1:1-18
- II. THE PERIOD OF BEGINNINGS.—John bears his testimony; Jesus begins to reveal himself; faith is begotten in some, and the first signs of opposition appear. (1:19-4:54)
1. The testimony of John and the beginnings of faith in Jesus. (1:19-2:12)
- a) The testimony of John to the representatives of the Jews. 1:19-28
- b) John points out Jesus as the Lamb of God and the one whom he had come to announce. 1:29-34
- c) John points out Jesus to his own disciples, and two of them follow Jesus. 1:35-42
- d) Jesus gains two other followers. 1:43-51
- e) In Cana of Galilee Jesus first manifests his glory in a sign and strengthens the faith of his disciples. 2: 1-12
2. Jesus in Jerusalem and Judea: opposition and imperfect faith. (2:13-3:36)
- a) The cleansing of the temple: opposition manifested. 2:13-22
- b) Unintelligent faith, based on signs, in Jerusalem. 2:23-25
- c) In particular, Nicodemus is reproved and instructed. 3: 1-15
- d) The motive and effect of divine revelation in the Son. 3:16-21
- e) The further testimony of John the Baptist to his own inferiority and Jesus' superiority. 3:22-30
- f) The supreme character of the revelation in the Son. 3:31-36
3. Jesus in Samaria, and the beginnings of work in Galilee. (chap. 4)
- a) Jesus' self-revelation to the Samaritan woman, and the simple faith of the Samaritans. 4: 1-42
- b) The reception of Jesus in Galilee, for the most part on the basis of signs seen, but in one case without waiting for such evidence. 4:43-54
- III. THE CENTRAL PERIOD OF JESUS' MINISTRY TO THE END OF HIS PUBLIC TEACHING.—Jesus declares himself more and more fully, many believe on him, and the faith of his disciples is strengthened, but the leaders of the nation reject him and resolve upon his death. (chaps. 5-12)
1. The healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, raising the sabbath question, and then the question of Jesus' relation to his Father, God. chap. 5
2. The feeding of the five thousand and attendant events leading to the discourse on Jesus as the Bread of Life, in consequence of which many leave him, but the Twelve believe in him more firmly. chap. 6

3. The journey to the Feast of Tabernacles, and discussion concerning who Jesus is, whence he is, and whither he goes.....	chaps. 7, 8
4. The healing of the man born blind, and the teaching of Jesus concerning himself as the Light of the World and concerning spiritual blindness.....	chap. 9
5. Discourse of Jesus at the Feast of Dedication concerning himself as the Good Shepherd and the Door of the Fold.....	chap. 10
6. The raising of Lazarus, and the teaching of Jesus concerning himself as the Resurrection and the Life.....	chap. 11
7. Jesus' last presentation of himself to the Jews of Jerusalem.....	(chap. 12)
a) Jesus anointed by Mary at Bethany.....	12:1-11
b) The triumphal entry.....	12:12-19
c) The coming of the Gentiles to see Jesus; Jesus' announcement of his death and its results.....	12:20-36a
d) The rejection of Jesus by the Jews; its nature and explanation.....	12:36b-50
IV. THE FULLER REVELATION OF JESUS TO HIS BELIEVING DISCIPLES.....	(chaps. 13-17)
1. The washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus, and the lesson of humility and service.....	13:1-20
2. The prediction of the betrayal, and the withdrawal of the betrayer.....	13:21-31a
3. The farewell discourses of Jesus.....	13:31b-16:33
4. The prayer of Jesus for his disciples.....	chap. 17
V. THE CULMINATION AND APPARENT TRIUMPH OF HOSTILE UNBELIEF.....	(chaps. 18, 19)
1. The arrest of Jesus.....	18:1-14
2. The trial before the Jewish authorities, and Peter's denial.....	18:15-27
3. The trial before Pilate.....	18:28-19:16
4. The crucifixion.....	19:17-30
5. The burial.....	19:31-42
VI. THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS OVER DEATH AND HIS ENEMIES.—The restoration and confirmation of faith.....	(chap. 20)
1. The empty tomb.....	20:1-10
2. The appearance of Jesus to Mary.....	20:11-18
3. The appearance to the disciples, Thomas being absent.....	20:19-25
4. The appearance to Thomas with the other disciples.....	20:26-29
5. Conclusion of the Gospel, stating the purpose for which it was written.....	20:30, 31
VII. APPENDIX.....	(chap. 21)
1. Appearance of Jesus to the seven by the Sea of Galilee, and his words concerning the tarrying of the beloved disciple.....	21:1-24
2. Second conclusion of the Gospel.....	21:25

Members of the group should then write the headings into their notebooks and paste under each that portion of the Gospel designated. The clippings should be placed at the extreme left of the page, leaving room for notes. It is well also to leave every other page blank for additional notes.

While this work is in progress, the leader may present a graphic picture of the beginnings of the church in Jerusalem, the work of Paul in carrying Christianity to the gentile world, the writing of his letters, and the subsequent writing of the Synoptic Gospels.

After the notebook work is completed, some time may be given to questions about the first three Gospels. The questions on the Gospel of John should be made note of and passed over to the following meeting.

SECOND MEETING

It is supposed that each member of the group has completed the study assigned to days 1 to 12. The leader should devote some time at the opening of the hour to presenting a picture of the life and thought in the gentile world at the end of the first century.

Then may follow a study together of the outline of the entire Gospel of John as presented on the preceding pages. The following points may be especially noted: (a) nearly one-half the book devoted to the last week; (b) the small number of stories of healing and other miracles; (c) the stories used to introduce "sermons" or discourses; (d) the prologue with its philosophy.

After this study one member of the group may present, with the use of the *Harmony of the Gospels*, a list of the events in the life of Jesus presented in the Synoptic Gospels, but omitted by John. Let the class discuss the significance of these omissions, and of the selection of events made by the author of John, especially as they may affect the purpose of the author.

Now take up for discussion questions 1 to 9 in the review list, spending all the remaining time in drawing out the thought of the members of the class and crystallizing the results of their work.

If, in addition to the daily reading, you can persuade any members to read the book through at a sitting (an hour's task), it will deepen their interest and help them to appreciate the peculiar structure of this Gospel.

REFERENCE READING

Goodspeed, *The Story of the New Testament*, chap. 17; Mathews, *A History of New Testament Times in Palestine*; Burton, *A Short Introduction to the Gospels*, chap. 5; Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, chap. 7; Moffatt, *The Theology of the Gospels*, chap. 1; Holdsworth, *Gospel Origins*, chaps. 1, 2; Fisher, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, chaps. 1-6; Moffatt, *Introduction to the New Testament*, chap. 5; Case, *The Evolution of Early Christianity*, chaps. 2-6; Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*; Sanday, *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*; Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Gospels"; Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, articles "Gospels," "Gospel of John."

The first three titles are suitable for popular reading by members of the group.